

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 136 630

HE 008 594

TITLE Education for Practical Wisdom. Address of the President; Report of the Board of Directors.

INSTITUTION Association of American Colleges, Washington, D.C.

PUB DATE 12 Feb 77

NOTE 26p.; Reports from the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Colleges (63rd, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 10-12, 1977)

AVAILABLE FROM Association of American Colleges, 1818 R Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$2.06 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Career Opportunities; Collective Bargaining; *Colleges; *Educational Planning; Females; *Higher Education; Liberal Arts; *Meetings; National Organizations; *Private Colleges; *Professional Associations; Speeches

IDENTIFIERS *Association of American Colleges; Independent Colleges; National Assn Independent Colleges Universities; Priorities

ABSTRACT

The report of the Association of American Colleges Board of Directors as presented at the 1977 annual meeting is offered. Discussed are the status of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Project on the Status and Education of Women, the cooperative work on the Change in Liberal Education project, and the Academic Collective Bargaining Information Service. AAC-sponsored publications during the year are reviewed, and the proposed National Center for Career Options in the Liberal Arts is described briefly. Association constituency, structure, finance, and staffing are also reviewed. Frederick W. Ness, in his president's report, speaks to the current needs and plans of the association. (LBH)

* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *

EDUCATION FOR PRACTICAL WISDOM

63rd annual meeting

Address of the President
Report of the Board of Directors

Association of American Colleges

February 10-12, 1977

Marriott Hotel, New Orleans



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES

Annual Meeting 1977

REPORT OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Association of American Colleges has successfully weathered a difficult year of transition. This assertion, of course, stands subject to the judgment that members of the Association will render in the decisions they take at this annual meeting on the future program and structure of the Association. But the Board of Directors makes the assertion with some confidence for reasons that are eloquently stated in the President's annual address and call for no repetition in this report.

The basic decisions taken at the annual meeting of 1976 came into formal effect with the inauguration of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities on July 1st. In conformity with the relevant resolutions adopted at Philadelphia, AAC continued to maintain the operations of the National Council of Independent Colleges and Universities through June 30th. Then, under arrangements negotiated between the two boards, we turned over to the new organization one half of the funds that remained available from the membership dues of independent institutions for supporting both associations for the rest of the year. Thus our Association did its best to help NAICU get off to a good start in taking over the responsibility for representing the distinctive interests of the independent sector of higher education in the sphere of public policy. In passing we may mention that the publicly controlled members of AAC, which could not be expected to contribute to the maintenance of NAICU, are being given a credit toward their 1977 dues of one half of that portion of their 1976 dues which was attributable to the half-year beginning July 1st.

So NAICU was safely launched and AAC was left with the unalloyed function which had historically been its most fundamental responsibility, the promotion of liberal learning. So far so good, but to translate that function into an operational program and to provide it with a structural framework demanded many months of hard thinking, earnest discussion and careful planning. The results are now laid before you for your critical appraisal and consequent action.

In his presidential address, Fred Ness has paid well deserved tribute to the help we received in this arduous process from our standing commissions, two special committees, the consultants who worked with them, and many other thoughtful and experienced advisers from outside as well as within the Association. The extent and intensity of the concern thus demonstrated for the public interest in humane and liberating learning, and for AAC as an instrument of that interest, has sustained and encouraged us in face of grave practical problems and our unblinking recognition that the future Association of American Colleges has no easy row to hoe. We are well aware that, with all the good will in the world, an organization devoted expressly to the relatively abstract and fugitive goal of promoting liberal learning and only indirectly to issues of institutional survival has to prove its worth if it is to secure the support of hard-pressed colleges and universities. But we are confident that it will do so.

And now Fred's fellow members on the board must in turn testify to the crucial leadership he has himself exerted by setting an example of unshakable faith, by speaking out in many places and in all seasons for our cause and by devoting unstinted and tireless effort to direction of the whole complex endeavor. In the lengthening and distinguished line of chief executive officers of this Association, his name will take an honored place. Need we add that our gratitude extends to an exemplary staff, without whose energy and devotion our hopes would have remained idle dreams and our best plans empty words.

Current Activities

In the year under review, the planning process had, of course, to be carried on in parallel with the Association's grant-aided projects and the services it provides for its members out of regular funds. We recognized that those services are too valuable to be simply displaced by noble aspirations and ambitious plans for the

future. So the Association's day-to-day activities have been prosecuted with undiminished vigor.

Two of our three major projects went from strength to strength. The Project on the Status and Education of Women continued to expand its clientele and enlarge its influence. A fresh infusion of foundation funds from our old benefactor the Carnegie Corporation of New York assured its prolongation for at least two more years. As we reported a year ago, the Academic Collective Bargaining Information Service, which AAC administers but whose sponsorship we now share with three other national associations, is already funded through June 1978. In the past year, under a grant from the Ford Foundation, ACBIS inaugurated a program of seminars, workshops and conferences on the collective bargaining process on the campus. In addition, the Service has since been assured of foundation funding for a study of changes in the pattern of faculty participation in the governance of institutions that have entered into collective bargaining contracts.

Regrettably, to our way of thinking, the third major project, on Change in Liberal Education -- also a joint enterprise with other partners -- will come to an end this month for lack of financial support beyond the initial grant from the Carnegie Corporation which sustained the project for three years. What we need not regret is that the impulse to change was reflected in and fostered by a project initiated in the first place by our Association. A variety of individual projects, undertaken under the aegis of the main project by eighteen widely differing institutions with more faith in the promise of the project than it was able to arouse in potential sources of funding, are very much alive and will, we hope, serve as an encouragement to others. The Board has promised that the Association will do what it can to ensure that the network of information-sharing and mutual support established by the participating institutions shall be preserved and that the achievements of the project will be adequately recorded for wider possible use in the future.

In the realm of tangible accomplishments in the past year, the Association has three substantial publications to its credit. The promised booklet resulting from the presidential seminars of 1975 on The President as Educational Leader duly appeared in mid-1976 and was widely distributed. The second report of our project, directed by Howard Bowen and John Minter, on Financial and Educational Trends in the Private Sector of American Higher Education came out, as planned, last April. It embodied an expansion of the indices of institutional condition and is generally regarded as increasing the utility of the continuing study. A third report, to carry forward the series as originally projected, is expected in the spring of this year. After unavoidable delays, the toil and travail of Professors Aiken, Adams and Hall and their associates at Marquette University and Georgia State, in the study of the problems presented by damage suits against academic institutions and the possibilities of insuring against them, gave birth to an impressive tome with the laconic and arresting title Liability. The report was published in this form by AAC, primarily for institutional distribution, and concurrently by the National Association of College and University Attorneys in a special issue of its journal. The latter method of publication ensures that references to the report will be included in indexes of legal journals.

In addition, the Association undertook the publication and distribution of an illuminating report prepared by a former member president, Professor Louis T. Benezet of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, on College Organization and Student Impact.

President Ness has spoken of two important services of the Association which have been expanded and strengthened in the past year: the rechristened Federal Resources Advisory Service and the Presidential Search Consultation Service which, under the same skilful management but with foundation support, has replaced our old informal arrangements for helping member colleges find suitable recruits for senior

administrative posts. We share his satisfaction with these developments but need not paint the lily.

A third workshop for academic deans, jointly sponsored as before by AAC, the American Conference of Academic Deans and the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences was held last summer in Zion, Illinois, and was as successful as the previous workshops. A fourth workshop is being planned for the summer of 1977, but that carries us over into the Association's program for the future.

Future Program

The furthest advanced of our planned activities is the proposed National Center for Career Options in the Liberal Arts. In the same general area of concern, we hope to obtain foundation support for a study of innovative practices in career preparation in liberal arts institutions. Concurrently, we are hoping to grapple with the problem of providing appropriate emphasis on humane values in professional training -- a field in which the Association took some tentative steps in a small conference last summer. We have on the stocks a fairly ambitious project for assessing current programs in pursuit of this aim in the fields of business, journalism, the health professions, engineering and the law and promoting further endeavors to that end. This must be a major concern of AAC if we truly believe that liberal learning is not just a matter for undergraduate programs but ought to be embodied along with the inculcation of purely professional skills in training for the professions.

In addition, to continuing the series of workshops for academic deans, we are giving serious consideration to reviving, in a form appropriate to the present and future, the so-called Intellectual Life Conferences of the 1950s and early 1960s, from which over 200 member presidents and eighty or ninety college deans appeared to derive substantial help in the effective performance of their institutional roles. From one angle, both of these activities may be regarded as contributing to the personal and professional development of academic administrators, but from another,

as they are focused on the aims of education, they are organically related to the central purpose of the future AAC.

President Ness dwelt at some length -- not by accident -- on the Dialogues and Conversations which the Association has been promoting in recent months. He referred jokingly to the arbitrary character of these rather uninformative labels, but the word "dialogue" is in fact the key to the Association's reoriented mission.

In the opinion of this Board, our nation has no more vital need than to provide the rising generation of citizens with educational experiences that are truly humane and liberating -- and to offer the older generation opportunities for re-education in the same spirit. To meet this need, many of our academic institutions are rethinking and remodeling their teaching programs. The effort must be intensified. It calls for courage and imagination, but it also calls, if we may risk a suspect word, for better coordination -- not by some external authority but through the voluntary cooperation of the institutions themselves. As we move into a period in which higher education must expect to receive a diminishing rather than an increasing share of the nation's economic resources, it cannot afford to indulge in wasteful duplication of effort -- endless reinvention of the wheel. Our colleges and universities must be prepared, to a far greater extent than they have commonly been in the past, to share information and learn from each other's experience. Nobody knows all the answers, and there is almost certainly no single, final answer to the question of what constitutes humane and liberating learning -- only provisional, alternative answers. But we are more likely to arrive at promising answers if we pursue them together rather than in isolation.

As a catalyst in this process of keeping ideas in circulation, the Association of American Colleges has, we believe, an indispensable part to play -- if only because no other national organization of academic institutions has as its central function a concern with the substantive problems of higher education. We seek to fulfil that role through a more effective mechanism for information exchange and a revamped publi-

cation program. But above all, we shall try -- through workshops, conferences, dialogues, conversations, seminars, whatever devices ingenuity may suggest and however they may be labeled -- to keep academic people talking with each other in one grand continuing dialogue aimed, as the whole corpus of research in the natural sciences is supposed to be, at ever broader and more coherent understanding of the phenomena. A parallel exchange of information and ideas between the academic community and other citizens, with the aim of fostering public understanding and support of liberal learning, will be a related goal of the Association.

Constituency and Structure

The reoriented mission and program that we are proposing for your adoption dictate a number of changes in the constitutional structure of the Association. Incidentally, that structure is in some respects outdated and unnecessarily complicated, but we believe that wholesale revision can be deferred for the time being if the immediately needed amendments are enacted.

Our conviction that every postsecondary program ought to embody humanizing and civilizing elements entails the corollary that liberal education can no longer be regarded as the exclusive province of any particular type of collegiate institution. So the most fundamental change to be effected by our proposed amendments is to open membership in the Association to any college or university which is regionally accredited or an accepted candidate for accreditation and which demonstrates a commitment to humane and liberating learning. Since such learning is appropriate at all levels of higher education and to professional as well as nonprofessional courses of study, and since schools and colleges within a complex university have their own special problems, it is further proposed that separate membership should be available to component units of a university--professional and graduate schools no less than colleges of arts and sciences.

With an eye to engaging the cooperation of knowledgeable individuals and of other organizations that share some part of our aims, the Board and its advisers canvassed the possibility of offering such organizations and persons some kind of

formal status in the Association. Since, however, the prime need seemed to be for the Association to maintain a firm foundation in institutional membership, and since other kinds of membership would involve complications needing further exploration, we decided that this issue should be deferred for the time being. Meanwhile, so far as interested organizations are concerned, a somewhat more than symbolic link with our Association is already provided by the device of honorary membership.

An amendment noted in the President's address is designed to strengthen the Association's institutional base by giving each member the right, if it so chooses, to appoint two or three of its officers instead of one single representative to maintain communication with AAC.

The third major amendment of substance is intended to provide for a governing body representative of the Association's enlarged field of service. It increases the number of board members from thirteen to twenty. A proviso preserves the crucial role of the chief executive officer of each membership unit (in most cases the college or university president), but also, for the first time in the Association's history, confers a constitutional status on academic officers as such. The slate of candidates proposed by the Committee on Nominations for election to the enlarged board seems to us to strike a just balance between maintaining continuity and according proper recognition to the fidelity of AAC's present members on the one hand, and on the other hand, giving prospective new members from outside the Association's traditional field of service a reasonable assurance that they too will be first-class citizens.

The remaining amendments (all of which were explained in detail in a memorandum circulated to member colleges along with the text of the proposed amendments in December) are either consequential or are intended to rectify archaic, obscure or cumbersome provisions of the present Constitution and By-Laws.

Another structural change that we propose does not require formal action on

the part of the membership because, for some unknown reason, the organs in question are not recognized in the Constitution and By-Laws. With some reluctance, we have decided to dispense with the standing commissions. Over the years -- up through our planning sessions of last spring and summer -- the commissions have been of great value in generating proposals for action, critically examining staff proposals, and generally helping to keep the Association's feet on the ground. The men and women who have given their time and energy to this voluntary service have earned the profound gratitude of their colleagues. But, for the future, we believe that the Association's purposes will be more economically served by short-term ad hoc advisory groups than by relatively large standing commissions meeting at regular intervals. The function of providing the staff with a spur or a curb, as needed, will be exercised by a small informal body called the President's Advisory Council.

Finance and Staffing

Changes of the magnitude of those that have been taking shape for our Association over the last twelve months cannot be effected without financial stresses and strains. The overwhelming majority of the members that were enrolled in AAC for 1976 have stayed with us and paid their dues for that year. But, aside from the fact that we gave NAICU what the British call a golden handshake, those dues were not calculated to carry AAC beyond the half-year ending 31 December 1976. In the second half of any fiscal year we become dependent on dues assessed for the then current calendar year. Members will have noted that the budget adopted by the Board for f.y. 1977 provides for a substantial deficit. The main reason for this is that, in fulfilment of our promise to keep to a minimum the additional cost of belonging to both AAC and NAICU instead of a single organization, the dues scale we are proposing for 1977 represents an appreciable reduction on AAC dues for 1976. About half of the deficit will be met from the surpluses accumulated by frugal management over the past three years; for the balance we are seeking foundation grants to see

us through the next couple of years. By the end of that time we hope that the Association will have earned the support of enough members, new and old, to make it completely self-supporting.

The adoption of the new dues scale, together with the election of the new members the Board will recommend for membership, will be effected by your acceptance of this report. As a matter of legal propriety, however, adoption of the amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws will require separate votes in accordance with the procedure of which members were notified in advance.

One reason why the financial situation of the Association is less precarious than it might have been is that while our future program has been in process of development we have been extremely conservative in the matter of staff appointments, including the replacement of senior staff members who have left AAC for other employment. In the year ending with this annual meeting, indeed, the Association will have undergone a nearly complete turnover of executive staff. Howard Holcomb and Dick Francis left in midsummer on the dissolution of NCICU. Elden Smith retired a few weeks later from the regular staff, though we were fortunate enough to be able to retain him as director of the Presidential Search Consultation Service. Almost at the same time, Sam Magill left to take up the presidency of Simon's Rock Early College. Finally, as this meeting ends, Eric Wormald, vice president of the Association and editor of Liberal Education, will retire after 22 years with the Association. All these men have served the Association well, and they will be sorely missed.

But the high quality you have come to expect in our staff will be fully maintained by the new staff members appointed in the last few months: Regina Kyle, who serves as director of program development; Jane Trevaskis, who is responsible for publications, communications and public relations; and Frank Keegan, who has accepted a temporary appointment to round out the executive staff for the next six months. Liberal Education will be well taken care of under an agreement we have

negotiated with the University of Iowa for the journal to be published for us by the university press with Professor H. Bradley Sagen as editor.

For a period of nearly five months between late June and mid-November 1976, in order to facilitate speedy decisions on matters of urgency, the Board delegated to its Administrative and Personnel Committee power to act in the Board's name as an interim executive committee. The full board met four times during the year: 25-26 April, 29-30 June and 14-15 November 1976 in Washington, D. C., and 9-10 February 1977 at the Marriott Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana.

We recommend the following institutions for election to membership in the Association:

Alice Lloyd College, Kentucky
Centenary College for Women, New Jersey
Miami University, Ohio
Northeastern Illinois University
St. Mary's College of Maryland
The University of Vermont
Valencia Community College, Florida
Wingate College, North Carolina

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT
Frederic W. Ness

In drafting a report on events which occurred at the annual meeting of AAC a year ago, one of my colleagues suggested as an appropriate title "The Philadelphia Story." Perhaps I might follow his lead and caption these remarks, with apology to Margaret Mead, "Coming of Age in New Orleans." For while acknowledging the possibility of wishful thinking, I would maintain that with this business session AAC is indeed moving apace into a new stage of maturity.

During my seven previous annual meetings as president of the association, I tried for the most part to devote my few minutes in these proceedings to addressing the broader issues affecting higher education and, in particular, liberal learning, reserving for the Report of the Board of Directors the summary of the year's activities. I am persuaded, though, that the unprecedented character of the past twelve months mandates that my remarks this year should offer something more in the way of personal reflections on how we got from there to here and where and how we go from now -- scarcely the quintessence of Attic prose but nonetheless a precise statement of intent!

Although I have just referred to these twelve months as "unprecedented," readers of the Carlson Report will recall that the historic moment with which the period began -- the decision to spin off our legislative concerns for the independent sector into a separate organization -- had ample precedent in the annals of the association. But precedent does not assure predictable outcomes, even when the variables are at a minimum -- which they certainly were not in this instance; and so the Board initiated a process of analysis and decision making unmatched, to my knowledge, in the association's long and productive existence.

The overarching issue was whether, in a straitened academic community already exhibiting symptoms of acute hyperassociationism, there is still place for a national organization devoting itself to the substantive aspects of higher education, with particular reference to humane and liberating learning. This was the basic question addressed by the Board of Directors and the standing commissions. It was the question posed to two special committees, one on program development, the other on constituency and structure, aided and abetted by two expert consultants, Dr. Miller Upton and Dr. Harry Porter; and to yet another ad hoc group which was alternately referred to as the "Blue Skyers" and "The Seven Wise Persons." And, I will add, their answer to the question was an overwhelming "yea."

But before proceeding, I must share with you a passing moment of narrative history. It consists of an exchange that took place at the opening meeting of the first of our special committees. Although tempted to use names, let me recount merely that following the chair's brief charge to the group, a college president sitting near the head of the table opened the discussion by asking, "What would we lose if we simply recommend the dissolution of AAC?" Instantly from the other end of the table a participant who has never had any intimate connection with the association, replied, "We would lose our soul!"

It was in the sobering spirit of this riposte that the committees, the standing commissions, the Board and, of course, the staff proceeded to address their responsibilities and to design the recommendations that are before you today. If I were further to characterize that spirit I would say that it was consistently realistic, positive, and dedicated to the humanistic imperative of our common educational goals.

As the deliberations advanced over the months certain premises emerged, with almost the precision of guidelines and ranging from the philosophical to the functional. Principal among these was the consensus that, while liberal learning should probably not ever be precisely defined, we need to arrive nationally at a somewhat more contemporary interpretation of its meaning and function. (Our only regret was that no one could seem to come up with a new and fresher name for it!) Corollary to this opinion, moreover, was the strong belief that liberal learning is no longer the exclusive prerogative of the undergraduate college of arts and sciences, a conclusion that I report with some hesitancy but that has obvious significance for the structure and the programs of AAC.

A second premise was that the liberal arts as traditionally conceived are, to quote from a recent editorial in The Washington Post, in a state of "general depression" and that the remedy calls for a deliberate, a coordinated, and above all a national effort. Although this depression is exacerbated by economic trends -- and what isn't these days? -- even by drastic shifts in the power structure, I interpret the concerns of my colleagues as lying primarily in the substantive aspects of the problem. Thus their proposed new mission for AAC lists in priority order, first "To enhance and promote humane and liberating learning" and then second, "To strengthen institutions of higher education as settings for humane and liberating learning."

I must pause for a moment here to share with you what might be dubbed "The Perils of Metaphor." For at that same first meeting of the Committee on Program Development one of the participants called for AAC to focus upon what he described as the "prophetic," as distinguished from the "priestly," function. As he saw it, Washington is oversupplied with associations serving the day-to-day needs of their member institutions. What is missing, he maintained, is an agency that

will keep its eyes on the horizon, that will be exclusively concerned with anticipating, in the words of the recent Secretary of HEW, David Mathews, the "charging agenda of higher education."

This view drew the immediate objection that no institutionally-based association can exist unless it devotes its attention to the nuts and bolts of institutional survival, that AAC needs to focus not upon the prophetic, not even upon the priestly, but rather upon the "kingly" function. And then, as if our metaphor were not becoming scrambled enough, an advocate of the first position, looking at yet another participant whose name happened to be Gresham, insisted that a kind of academic Gresham's Law would become quickly operative if we were to settle for any compromise. In other words, the discussion had all the earmarks of the typical faculty meeting! Only the most heroic individual restraint enabled the committees to free themselves of this metaphoric entrapment to achieve, finally, the balanced recommendations which lie before you today.

As I reviewed the minutes of the many meetings leading up to the new design for AAC, I was unable to detect any relevant issue of significance which was overlooked. This obviously is not the same as saying that in every instance we had the prescience to arrive at only correct solutions, that consensus was always achieved, or even that all issues were fully resolved. We were, after all, only human -- or should I say "humane." But we now have some clear, unequivocal directives.

As "The National Association for Liberal Learning," principally in the institutional setting, AAC is rededicating itself to a mission which has not been and is not now the central preoccupation of any other national association. Thus it is in a better position than heretofore to complement the activities of the other broadly based institutional groups; to coordinate and energize the

activities of a number of diverse organizations which share, centrally or peripherally, this vital interest; to assure, by minimizing duplication and overlapping, that our limited common resources for the advancement of liberal learning are most effectively utilized. (With a brief pat on our associational back, I would claim of course that AAC's record over the years in seeking this elusive goal has been notable among the national organizations.)

Then too, it must seek to provide only those services and undertake only those activities that are appropriate to a national association, eschewing anything that could be better pursued on a local or regional basis. In short, it must resist a temptation that is all but inherent in the dynamics of a national association, which is to try to be everything to everybody! In particular AAC must examine each new activity in terms of its relevance to the fundamental mission, which, in my shorthand, is the advancement of liberal learning in the institutional setting.

Equally important is the necessity for our developing a program that is sufficiently comprehensive as measured against the statement of mission, that will convincingly meet the needs of the membership without encouraging false expectations, and that is within the range of the association's current and prospective resources. Finally, just as liberal learning itself is an educational design for engendering in the individual a capacity for adjusting to change, the very mission of AAC, as reflected in programs and activities, will have to remain flexible as, in the prophetic role, we discern on the educational horizon a need for changing agendas.

For these and many other insights too numerous to include in this account we must thank the hundred or so of our colleagues who responded so creatively to the opportunities opened to your association by the decision reached overwhelmingly at last year's meeting. And this, in short, is how we got from there to here. The larger questions remain, however: What are we going to do about it and how?

A partial response, I believe, has already been expressed in action. A number of you have participated in the series of regional Dialogues and Conversations which AAC has been co-sponsoring in various parts of the country beginning in late October. Although attendance had to be limited for geographical and structural reasons, we are endeavoring to give the excellent written proceedings wide dissemination. I commend them for your bedside perusal. Further, a second series is now well into the planning stage. (By the way, the distinction between a Dialogue and a Conversation as we have conceived them can only be determined by the skillful employment of a digital computer!)

Aside from their intrinsic value in exploring basic issues in liberal learning, moreover, the Dialogues and Conversations deserve some special comment. First, the thematic content of these colloquies covers a wide span of interests -- from the problems of career education in colleges of arts and sciences through the special mission of church-related colleges to liberalizing the education of nontraditional students. One of the most exciting of the Dialogues, in fact, was concerned with the place of liberal learning in the community college. I hope you will not miss this eye-opening report when it arrives on your desk.

Second, the programs have sought to focus on the place of humane and liberating learning in a range of institutional settings that would have seemed inappropriate a few years back. Further, the participants themselves represented a wider spectrum of academic responsibilities than has been characteristic of AAC activities heretofore and thus opened up some startling new insights.

Third, the Dialogues and the Conversations enjoyed the benefit of co-sponsorship, signaling AAC's intent to seek cooperation from institutions and organizations sharing its concerns. Speaking for the staff, we are thoroughly enjoying the experience of being at one and the same time cohosts and generously welcomed

guests. Thus you can well understand my thought that this is a form of partnership which has a tremendous potential. The same pattern, of course, has been employed effectively in the annual workshops for academic deans conducted with the American Conference of Academic Deans and the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences, as well as in this year's series of seminars on the liberal arts in which we have joined with the Association for Innovation in Higher Education.

One final word on the Dialogues and Conversations -- and I place emphasis upon them because they do indeed demonstrate a major strategy for the achievement of AAC's mission -- it is by no means accidental that a number of the issues pursued in these regional sessions are incorporated into the program of this 63rd Annual Meeting. I find myself greatly attracted, in fact, to the notion that our yearly convocation should assume the nature of a national "congress," a kind of American Assembly, on liberal learning, building upon, though not necessarily confined to, a sequence of regional deliberations whose analysis of issues would contribute substantively to the plenary discussions.

In any case, through initiating and catalyzing such continued dialogue AAC will seek a better understanding, a more intensive exploration, a wider acceptance of the importance of humane and liberating learning not only within the academic community but throughout the larger society we all serve. And this will constitute a significant segment of our total program.

Another exciting activity for the new AAC, whose need has been confirmed through intensive investigation, is in the area of information collection and dissemination focused upon liberal learning. Obviously this is not a new concern of the association. An appreciable amount of staff time over the years has gone into responding to inquiries from the field on the widest possible array of subjects. Further AAC's

numerous publications -- including its research and conference reports and, of course, the journal Liberal Education -- represent a significant contribution.

(In fact I must resist the temptation to list by title several of our recent "best sellers.") Without duplicating the fine work of NEXUS or of the ERIC Clearinghouse, however, we are now regularizing our efforts at information collection and dissemination in which the focus will be upon institutional solutions to the issues involved in the ever varying spectrum of liberal learning. Although we expect to address a more extensive audience than before, both within and beyond the academic community, we believe that this is a service which lies comfortably within the scope of a frugal staffing design.

Whether the activities I have just described are encompassed in the prophetic or the priestly function I leave to your judgment. There remains, however, the kingly component of our metaphor, and this I interpret as involving more directly the second, the more nuts-and-boltsy, half of our dual mission: i.e., "To strengthen institutions of higher education as settings for humane and liberating learning." Prefacing what follows with the assertion that we shall be continuously alert to new needs and potential services, always assuming they pass the "mission" test, let me mention several of the strictly functional services which we have newly redesigned or which are now in advanced stages of preparation.

The Federal Resources Advisory Service, which can now boast of 660 subscribers and a charming staff, is well enough known to require little further comment, except to point out that it has been considerably enhanced. To my pleasant surprise this program, originally intended for only those smaller institutions that cannot readily develop their own staff expertise, has been attracting participants from the widest possible range of institutions, large-small, public-private, almost literally from Bangor to San Diego!

Second, as a great many institutions and individuals have discovered, we have, through support from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation and The EXXON Education Foundation, been enabled to enlarge our services in the recruitment of presidents and chief academic officers. My colleague Elden Smith, whose acquaintance with the leadership in higher education is almost unmatched, has been discovering, possibly to his sorrow, just what a three-fifth-time job entails! I could have forewarned him when I asked him to delay his retirement but, for obvious reasons, yielded to my reluctance.

Passing over such well known AAC-sponsored services as the Project on the Status and Education of Women and the Academic Collective Bargaining Service, I want, finally, to mention briefly a proposed activity about which you will hear much more in the near future. With the support of a feasibility grant from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, Dr. Regina Kyle, who joined the staff in September, is in the last stages of designing a "National Center for Career Options in the Liberal Arts." This comprehensive program -- which will be under the direction of AAC but, we confidently expect, will engage the cooperation of many other institutions, agencies, and associations -- will provide a frontal attack on what is surely one of the most perplexing problems in higher education: the problem of effective utilization of our intellectual resources in the liberal arts during this period of academic depression. But rather than describing its many facets in this report, I am not above hoping that this staccato reference will stimulate your further curiosity.

In summary, AAC seeks to achieve its mission through four interrelated areas of service. First, it is trying to foster a new and enlarged understanding of humane and liberating learning through encouraging continued dialogue in the widest possible variety of settings. Second, it is actively engaged in promoting the professional

development of that leadership without whose commitment this vital mission cannot advance. Third, it is collecting and disseminating such information as is essential to achievement of the first two purposes. And finally, in every appropriate way, it is concerned with aiding the individual institution for which liberal learning is a significant area of interest. Quite a handful, as you will see.

At the outset of these remarks I indicated that my intent was to provide some personal reflections on how we got from Philadelphia to New Orleans and where and how we go from here. Frankly, my strategy was to try to steer a moderate course between titillation and tedium. As all addresses must, therefore, and as the better ones do sooner rather than later, these remarks are drawing to a close. Yet I am really not quite finished, for I need to share something very near to my heart and mind.

As did many of you, I listened closely to the floor debate at the meeting of last February. I heard the expressions of doubt about the ability of AAC to survive unless it became exclusively the legislative voice for the independent sector. I was persuaded personally, as were the large majority of the voting representatives, that such a move would unavoidably entail a further diversion of energy away from liberal learning -- the traditional emphasis of the association, which seemed to have been more and more overshadowed during the previous half dozen years.

I can assert with confidence that no doubts were expressed from the floor which had not been considered at length by those whose study and often painful deliberation led to the recommendations upon which you voted so decisively. But black and white are not always mutually exclusive, nor is every decision decisive. Moreover, in the instance of an association whose operating budget relies largely upon membership dues, there is really only one type of vote which is ultimately significant, and that is the signature upon a dues check.

AAC is by no means the only national association which has experienced some loss of institutional members in recent years, partly as the result of the serious economic stringency in so many colleges and universities, partly as the result of the rapidly mounting demands upon that line item in the budget which covers organizational dues partly, in our case, as the result of a wait-and-see attitude vis-à-vis AAC and NAIU.

Only a few years ago I myself was sitting where you are. Budgets, as I know only too well, have never been easy to balance, and such items as associational dues are not, to use a Washington term, among the "mandated" costs. Thus the key question must always be, what does my institution get for this particular membership dollar? And characteristically when we ask that question we expect an answer which can be translated into quantitative terms. It is, of course, the same question our students and their parents, as well as the members of state legislatures and the Congress, are asking when they contemplate enrollment in or support for the liberal arts college. And when you and I answer to the effect that there are certain values which cannot be readily converted into dollars, you and I both know the experience of the skeptical look. It is not enough, either, to point to our distinguished alumni of the past; our students want to know what we can do for them now and in the immediate future. Similarly, it is not enough to point to the outstanding contributions of AAC over its sixty-odd-year history. You have a right to ask what the association is doing for you now and what it can do for you in the future. And I must respond, with moderate regret, that I may not be able to give you an answer which would completely satisfy your gimlet-eyed financial vice president, that official who made my many years as dean and president so consistently stimulating.

I must say to you candidly that I would not expect the new AAC to be of immediate assistance to you in balancing your fiscal budget, even in helping your institution

to survive if your problem has been reduced to that. I do believe, though, and this is far more than a passing conviction, that the new AAC is and will continue to be making an enormous contribution to the quality of that survival, leading not only to a richer institutional fulfillment but to a far more meaningful contribution to a humane and liberal society. And I will remind you, further, of a long-standing position of the AAC Board which holds, to quote from a recent annual report, that "no college however skillfully managed and generously supported can hope to survive unless it offers an educational program that attracts students by its demonstrable relevance to their needs and aspirations."

Years ago one of my friends, talking to the then chairman of the English Department in the Yale Graduate School, asserted that he could not afford to accept his offer of a teaching position at Yale for the following year. The reply -- and at least this part of the exchange has a contemporary ring -- was simply, "Young man, you can't afford not to accept our offer!" Well, it would be presumptuous of me to say that you cannot afford not to support AAC. We have no constituency that is virtually defined by law; we do not have the big stick of accreditation that sustains some of the more highly specialized associations; we cannot hold out the inducement of pointing you to new funding from whatever source, real or wishful.

But we do have a mission and a program that are as distinct as they are essential to the well-being of the entire educational community; and we have faith that in you academic deans and in you presidents who, in moments however rare, indulge in the luxury of humane reflection AAC even has a natural cadre of missionaries to promote the need for liberal learning in the face of the most competitive demands upon our assets.

Uniquely in the recent history of the association we are now in a position to maintain programs and services which hold promise of catalyzing and coordinating the

resources of the higher-education and even the larger community in behalf of the liberal component of our enterprise. And so I close with an appeal to the executive and academic leadership in our colleges and universities who must make the hard decisions in the weeks and months ahead about the allocations of precious dues dollars.

I do not question your faith in the importance and even in the centrality of liberal learning. I do know, however, that we have not been accustomed to think of humane and liberating learning as something which requires a coordinated national effort, even though we so effortlessly accept such a necessity in many other more specialized professional or administrative areas. I would ask simply that you look to the heart of the enterprise and give it the continued and expanded attention which it richly deserves and so critically needs.